

The Annual Report

on activity and management of the

Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education

for 2020

Bratislava, 20 May 2021

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THE INTRODUCTION

**The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education** (‘the Agency’) was established as of 1 November 2018 by Act No 269/2018 on quality assurance of higher education and amending Act No 343/2015 on public procurement and amending certain acts, as amended (the ‘Quality Assurance Act’).

The Agency is a public institution that carries out the activities of external quality assurance of higher education and has its registered office in Bratislava.

The mission of the Agency is to improve the quality of education in accordance with the European Standards for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ESG 2015) and to contribute to ensuring and improving the quality of higher education in the Slovak Republic with modern tools in line with the expectations of all stakeholders. At the same time, it is also the provision of a professional and independent view of the quality of higher education within the Slovak Republic, thereby strengthening the culture of quality within higher education institutions.

The Agency’s activities in 2020 were mainly aimed at preparing the completion of the process of adoption of new accreditation standards, the methodology for their evaluation, the preparation and approval of the necessary internal rules of the Agency, explaining changes in the quality assurance of higher education to both academics and the wider public, widening the list of reviewers of the Agency, preparing training courses for the Agency’s reviewers and the Agency’s staff. In particular, over the past year, the Agency has carried out consultations with stakeholders on the quality assurance system of higher education and consultations with foreign experts on the optimal setting of external quality assurance processes for higher education. As part of its activities, the Agency was forced to respond flexibly to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also affected the Slovak Republic since March 2020. A number of activities of the Agency, including meetings of the Executive Board, were therefore carried out in a remote manner via videoconferencing (Zoom and MS Teams) or other means of information and communication technology.

1. BODIES OF THE AGENCY

The bodies of the Agency shall be:

1. Chairman of the Executive Board,
2. Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board,
3. the Executive Board,
4. the Commission of the Oppositions Agency (hereinafter referred to as the “Appeal Commission”);
5. the controller,
6. head of the office.
   1. Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board

The Chairperson of the Executive Board is the statutory body of the Agency, manages the Agency, acts on its behalf and represents it externally. The Chairperson of the Executive Board shall be represented in his absence by the Deputy Chairperson of the Executive Board. The President and Vice-President of the Executive Board shall be appointed and dismissed by the Minister for Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as “Minister of Education”).

**Prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD.,** Chairman of the Executive Board

**Prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD., LL.M.,** Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board

* 1. The Executive Board

The Executive Board shall have nine members, including the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board. The members of the Executive Board shall be appointed and dismissed by the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education appoints two members on a proposal from the Council of Higher Education of the Slovak Republic and two members on the proposal of the Slovak Rector’s Conference from persons who are internationally recognised experts in their field of activity, two members on a proposal from the Student Council of Higher Education and two members on the proposal of representatives of employers; the ninth member shall be the Chairman of the Executive Board.

The scope of the Executive Board is defined in Section 7 of the Quality Assurance Act.

* 1. Composition of the Executive Board in 2020

Members of the Executive Board:

**Prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD.,** President

**Prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD., LL.M., Vice**-President

**Prof. Julius Horváth, PhD.,** member

**Prof. RNDr. František Kačík, PhD.**, member

**Ing. Viliam Kupec, PhD**., member

**Mgr. art. Bálint Lovász**, member

**Prof. PaedDr. Vladimir Patráš, CSc.,** member of Prof. **MUDr. Iveta Šimková, CSc.**, member of Prof. **JUDr. Ivan Šimovček, CSc.**, member

* 1. The Appeals Committee

The Board of Appeal shall review the procedures of the Executive Board and the working groups of the Executive Board of the Agency on the basis of objections made by the parties to the decisions or statements of the Executive Board. The Appeals Board shall have five members and two alternates appointed and dismissed by the Minister for Education. The term of office of the members of the Commission shall be four years.

With effect from 1 February 2020, Ms Martina Luby, Minister for Education, appointed members and one alternate member of the Appeals Board, as follows:

**Prof. Doc. JUDr. Marek Šmid, PhD.,** member

**JUDr. Peter Štrpka, PhD.,** member of JUDr**. Marcel Jurko, PhD.,** member of **Mgr. Roman Oleksik, LL.M.,** member of **Prof. Ing. Jozef Mihok, PhD.,** member

**Prof. JUDr. Margita Prokeinová, PhD.,** alternate member

The first meeting of the Appeals Board took place on 3 February 2020 at the Agency’s premises. Prof. doc. JUDr. was elected Chairman of **the Appeals Board. Mark Šmid, PhD.**

* 1. The Controller

The Controller is appointed on the basis of the results of the selection procedure and dismissed by the Minister for Education. The term of office of the Controller shall be four years.

In 2020, the Minister of Education Martina Luby was appointed as controller.

Ing. Ivan Hargaš.

* 1. Head of the Office

The Head of the Office shall ensure, in particular, the proper functioning of the Agency, including the administrative, technical, spatial and staffing of the Agency, and shall manage the Agency’s office to the extent determined by the Chairperson of the Executive Board. The Head of the Office shall be appointed and dismissed by the President of the Executive Board on the basis of the results of the selection procedure.

**Mgr. Zuzana Romančíková**, Head of the Office

1. INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING OF THE AGENCY

In 2020, the Agency continued to build its infrastructure as a newly established independent public-law institution, it started to build from its full foundation in 2019.

In 2020, the Agency focused on the development of its institutional building, in particular in the areas of staffing. In total, it created 9 new jobs. Recruitments were carried out throughout the year to strengthen the Agency’s individual activities. Priority was given to strengthening the separation of accreditation activities by 5 staff members; the Analytical Activities Unit was reinforced by 2 staff members. Last but not least, jobs were added to one lawyer and one economist.

The new lease contract for the lease of office space was signed by the Agency in December 2019 due to the gradual construction and expansion of the Agency’s staff security. By moving to the new premises, the Agency also changed its seat and on 20 March 2020 the change of the seat of the Agency was registered in the Register of Legal Entities, Entrepreneurs and Public Authorities.

The Agency’s premises had to be secured with interior equipment, in particular furniture, electrical appliances for normal operation, IT and presentation technology. Due to the recruitment of new staff, it was necessary to create suitable working conditions for everyone, whether administrative, technical or spatial.

The Agency has also continued activities aimed primarily at raising public awareness of its activities and making it more visible in the public domain. The Agency used various tools to communicate not only with the professional but also with the general public. The agency also issued press releases, used the Agency’s website, Facebook account to publish important information, and continued to build and improve the Agency’s internal information system. The Agency has acquired a new information system for the registration of mail, files and registry management.

* 1. Rules of general application and internal rules of the Agency
     1. Information on the amendment of the Quality Assurance Act in 2020

On 5 November 2020, the National Council of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter ‘the National Council’) approved an Act amending Act No 131/2002 on universities and amending certain acts, as amended, and amending and supplementing the Law on Quality Assurance (‘the approved Act’), dealing in particular with the issue of withdrawal of degrees, which has resonated in the public for a long time and some amendments also affected the Law on Quality Assurance. The approved law was returned by decision of President Zuzana Čaputová to the National Council of the Slovak Republic, which subsequently broke the veto of the President and approved it in its original version.

As mentioned above, Article II of the approved Act amended the Law on Quality Assurance, in particular because the standards for the internal quality assurance system require a functional internal system from the university, which, among other things, is intended to prevent and deal with cases of plagiarism and unethical action. Given the societal urgency of tackling plagiarism, these changes are intended to strengthen the Agency’s ability to implement them.

The adoption of the conclusions of the collective bodies was further clarified and the possibility of holding meetings of collective bodies, including via videoconference or other means of information and communication technology, was introduced directly into the law without the physical presence of their members. Among the most significant changes that have been adopted was the shortening of the period for higher education institutions to so-called alignment with the new accreditation standards. This is also linked to the strengthening of the possibilities of the Agency, which, as of 1 January 2021, is allowed to initiate proceedings on its own initiative and to intervene against the higher education institution within the time of submission by the college of information that it has brought the internal system into line with the standards for the internal quality assurance system if the Agency has reasonable grounds to suspect that the higher education institution concerned is not complying with the legislation or its internal rules. In order to allow for the active participation of universities in international cooperation in the field of the implementation of joint study programmes until they have assessed their internal quality assurance system and thus be able to self-accredit joint study programmes, it was possible — under certain conditions — to allow higher education institutions to accredit joint study programmes during the transition period.

* + 1. Internal rules of the Agency

In the course of 2020, the Executive Board approved internal regulations, the adoption of which is also foreseen and provided for by the Law on Quality Assurance. This year, other internal rules have also been adopted to ensure the efficient and proper functioning of the Agency. As a result of the gradual introduction and implementation of the processes for the systematic institutional building of the Agency and the application practice, a number of changes to the Agency’s internal rules also needed to be adopted this year.

In 2020, amendments to the following internal rules of the Agency (Table 1) were approved by the Executive Board:

Table 1: Internal rules of the Agency as amended in 2020

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number | Title of the internal regulation | Date of approval by the executive  the Council |
| 4/2019 | Organisation of the SAAVŠ dated 17th. 4. 2019 | approved on 20. 2. 2020 |
| 11/2019 | Directive on the creation and use of a social fund for SAAVŠ employees of 24. 10. 2019 | approved on 18. 6. 2020 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 12/2019 | SAAVŠ Accounting Directive dated  14. 11. 2019 | approved on 17. 12. 2020 |

The following internal rules of the Agency were adopted in 2020 (Table 2):

Table 2: Internal rules of the Agency approved in 2020

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number | Title of the internal regulation | Date of approval by the Executive Board |
| no 1/2020 | Internal rule on the SAAVŠ procedure in assessing the activities of higher education institutions according to the regulations in force up to 31. 10. 2018 | approved on the day  23. 1. 2020 |
| no 2/2020 | Rules of Procedure of the SAAVŠ Objections Review Commission | approved on the day  23. 1. 2020 |
| no 3/2020 | Rules of Procedure of the SAAVŠ Executive Board Working Group | approved on the day  20. 2. 2020 |
| no 4/2020 | SAAVŠ Payment Cards Directive | approved on  21. 5. 2020 |
| no 5/2020 | Directive on the establishment of procedures for public procurement by SAAVŠ contracting authority | approved on  18. 6. 2020 |
| no 6/2020 | Registers of SAAVŠ | approved on the day  18. 6. 2020 |
| no 7/2020 | Directive on travel compensation of SAAVŠ staff | approved on  30. 7. 2020 |
| no 8/2020 | Directive on the internal screening system for whistleblowing reports SAAVŠ | approved on  30. 7. 2020 |
| no 9/2020 | Principles for inclusion in the list of reviewers, removal from this list and creation of working groups of the SAAVŠ Executive Board | approved on the day  17. 9. 2020 |
| no 10/2020 | SAAVŠ Directive on the protection of personal data | approved on  22. 10. 2020 |
| no 11/2020 | SAAVŠ Directive on the handling of complaints | approved on  22. 10. 2020 |
| no 12/2020 | Directive on the procedure for mandatory publication of SAAVŠ orders, invoices and contracts | approved on  19. 11. 2020 |
| no 13/2020 | SAAVŠ procedure for assessing the activities of higher education institutions according to the regulations in force up to 31. 10. 2018 and when deciding on consent to the modification of the study programme | approved on the day  17. 12. 2020 |
| no 14/2020 | Directive on the procedure for the exercise of financial control of SAAVŠ | approved on  17. 12. 2020 |

* 1. Organisational structure of the Agency and staffing

As of 31 December 2020, the Agency had a total number of 30 staff members employed, of which 16 men and 14 women. 10 employees performed part-time work. There were a total of 11 persons who carried out an activity on the basis of agreements performed outside the employment relationship (work agreement)

— 1 person; working Activity Agreement — 9 persons; agreement on student brigade work — 1 person).

The Agency shall be organisationally divided into:

1. the Agency’s office,
2. the Accreditation Activities Unit; and
3. Department of Methodological and Analytical Activities.
   * 1. Office of the Agency

The Agency’s office shall carry out activities ensuring the proper functioning of the Agency, including administrative, technical, spatial and personnel security. The Agency’s office shall ensure in particular:

1. the administrative work of the Agency;
2. records of incoming and outgoing mail,
3. administration of the Agency’s registry and archive;
4. supporting the work of the Agency’s collective bodies, including the work of working groups and their material and technical equipment for work;
5. drawing up the minutes of the meetings of the Agency’s bodies and publishing resolutions;
6. the service and proper preparation of written decisions by the bodies of the Agency;
7. staffing agenda, including attendance records of the Agency’s staff;
8. economic activities related to the Agency’s activities,
9. information and technical security of the Agency;
10. other tasks and activities under the instructions of the Chairperson of the Executive Board of the Agency.

The Agency’s office shall be managed by the Head of the Office to the extent determined by the Chairperson of the Executive Board. The head of the office is governed by the Quality Assurance Act.

* + 1. Department of Accreditation Activities

The Accreditation Activities Unit carries out professional activities and ensures the Agency’s agenda related to accreditation procedures, the assessment of the internal system of the applicant/participant or the Agency’s comments on the application for state approval.

At the same time, it ensures the preparation of the Executive Board’s decision-making documents, in particular by:

1. ensure the preparation of assessments of the applicant’s internal system;
2. draw up evaluation reports;
3. draw up the recommendations of the Working Groups to the Executive Board and expert opinions or other necessary documentation;
4. provide documentation on the procedures for the screening of the university action plan; and

monitoring the timetable for its implementation,

1. performs other professional activities specified by law.

The Accreditation Activities Unit is directly managed by the Chairperson of the Executive Board or authorised by him/her

the employee; in 2020, Ing. Andrej Piovarči, PhD.

* + 1. Department of Methodological-analytical Activities

The Department of Methodological-analytical Activities ensures the methodological, analytical and training activities of the Agency and ensures in particular:

1. work on the preparation of documents for the preparation and adaptation of accreditation standards,
2. work on the preparation of documents for methodological guidance of the working groups;
3. preparation and implementation of professional and methodological trainings,
4. analytical documents for decisions taken by the Agency’s bodies;
5. preparation of thematic reports;
6. other documents related to the activities of the Methodological-analytical Activities Unit.

The Methodological-analytical Activities Unit is directly managed by the Chairperson of the Executive Board or by a staff member authorised by him; in 2020, Renata Hall, PhD.

* + 1. Professional development of employees

Professional development is the process of deepening, improving and expanding professional competences for the performance of specialised activities. It is carried out through education, self-education and the performance of a work activity aimed at innovating these competences.

Employee development is crucial in every organisation and helps not only the employees themselves, but also the progress of the whole organisation. The Agency therefore places a high emphasis on the training and development of its colleagues, not only when taking up employment, but also throughout their period of service at the agency.

Upon arrival, each of the colleagues will undergo compulsory initial training and then in the course of the year completes their knowledge in individual fields according to the job classification and description of their work activities. In addition to the initial training, the process of adaptation of the employee during the first months of his/her work in the organisation is also important.

The Agency also pays important attention to the development and progress of its staff, including

creating the right conditions for career development.

In addition, it gives space and background to education and self-education from a long-term perspective

the process.

Based on this knowledge, the staff of the Agency’s Accreditation Activities Unit received 3 types of training in 2020, namely:

* + - 1. training of newly recruited staff,
      2. training to improve the professional knowledge of employees;
      3. training to improve staff skills when working with information and communication technologies used within the Agency.

During 2020, 5 staff members were recruited to the Accreditation Activities Unit. The training process for these employees was led by Ing. Andrej Piovarči, PhD., and RNDr. Mary’s Holly.

1. The training of newly recruited employees was mainly focused on:

* competence and activities of the Accreditation Commission, the advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter:

“Accreditation Commission”),

* the mission of the Accreditation Commission and the accreditation process within the competence of the Accreditation Commission,
* an overview of the regulations in force by 31 October 2018 and the accreditation criteria issued according to the rules in force by 31 October 2018. 10. 2018 in custody of the university environment,
* legislation in the field of higher education;
* use of the Agency’s information system and website.

1. Training aimed at improving the expertise of the staff of the Accreditation Activities Unit on improving their expertise was oriented towards:

* summary of information relating to the Agency’s procedure under Section 35(6) et seq. of the Quality Assurance Act
* standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-2015);
* the Agency’s standards effective as of 1 September 2020,
* the methodology for evaluating the Agency’s standards;
* the process of communication with the reviewers of the Agency;
* overview of documents related to the accreditation process;
* the procedure for setting up the working groups of the Executive Board and working with the accreditation applications received;
* a manual for the administration of the Agency’s accreditation activities.

1. In the context of improving skills in working with the information and communication technology used within the Agency, staff have received training for the use of the Agency’s registry system and information system.

In addition to the above trainings, the staff of the Accreditation Activities Unit regularly participated in on-line consultations organised by the Agency, in particular with the participation of representatives of universities. The consultation focused mainly on the interpretation of accreditation standards and accreditation process and led by R. Redhammer — Chairman of the Executive Board, R. Matlovič — Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board, Ing. M. Djubáková, PhD. — methodology of accreditations, and Ing. A. Piovarči, PhD. responsible for the management of the Accreditation Activities Unit.

The staff of the Accreditation Activities Unit also participated in webinars organised by ENQA, EUA or EQAF. These have been used to expand knowledge and information on improving the quality of universities. These webinars brought together the experience of various experts (staff) of European institutions aimed at improving the quality of higher education institutions. These were the following webinars:

* Webinar Bologna series #5/7 — theme: An Introduction to the European Quality Assurance

the Framework,

* Webinar EQAF 2020 — theme: Flexible higher education is here,
* Webinar EQAF 2020 — theme: External quality assurance in emergency situations,
* Webinar EQAF 2020 — theme: Micro-credentials paving the way to flexible higher education,
* Webinar EQAF 2020 — theme: Quality assurance shaping change.

Self-education shall also be part of the work of the Accreditation Activities Unit staff; in the year

In particular, 2020 focused on:

* the Quality Assurance Act,
* standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-2015);
* the Agency’s standards,
* the methodology for evaluating standards;
* Act No 131/2002 on universities and amending certain acts,
* lectures (videos) from the conference of the agency held on 23. — 24 September 2020.

Leaders of large companies find that uncovering the personal potential of workers becomes as important as the introduction of new technologies. Against this background, the Agency is also preparing training for its staff in different areas of their work in 2021. The first staff training was planned for February 2021 on the *topic of facilitative skills — “soft skills”.* Further training activities of employees will be tailored to their needs and requirements.

In 2020, the Agency’s staff received 3 types of training, namely:

1. Training of newly recruited staff, which focused in particular on:
   * occupational health and safety and fire protection; the training was conducted

Ing. Evou Hlivová-bezp.sk,

* + accreditation processes; the training was led by Ing. Andrej Piovarči, PhD., in charge of the Department of Accreditation Activities.

1. Training to improve the expertise of the Agency’s staff on:
   * Is VEMA — module of personnel and wages, economic module, module of travel orders for domestic and foreign business trips of agency employees and their correct setting for the needs of the agency, organised by employees of VEMA,
   * Public procurement, organised by the Adviser of the Entrepreneur,
   * Accounting and financial statements in a non-profit organisation, organised by Sféra, a. s.,
   * Registry management, organised by EDOS-SMART, s. r. o.
   * Regular annual training on health and safety at work, organised by Ing. Eva Hlivová-bezp.sk.
2. Training to improve skills when working with information and communication technologies used within the Agency. The staff of the office received training for the use of:
   * registration information system from A.V.I.S.,
   * the Agency’s information system,
   * training to operate and manage the Agency’s website according to the positions responsible for disclosing information in their area of competence.

As lifelong learning is a prerequisite for successful staff, the Agency plans to invest in the development of its colleagues in 2021, according to the requirements of daily practice and the needs of colleagues themselves to increase their level of personal growth and professional performance.

* 1. Spatial security of the Agency

In the first months of 2020, the Agency used temporary premises with a total area of 172.78 m², located in the administrative building of the Centre of Scientific and Technical Information of the Slovak Republic (CVTI) on Ul. Old grunts 52 in Mlynská dolina in Bratislava. These premises were no longer sufficient in the context of the Agency’s staff extension; therefore, the Agency proceeded to select new premises. During the first quarter of 2020, the seat of the Agency was changed and since 1 March 2020 the Agency is located in an administrative building on the Square of Liberty 11 in Bratislava. The total area of the administrative premises rented in the building by the Agency is 483 m2. The agency has 6 parking spaces for these areas.

1. ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND METHODOLOGY FOR THEIR EVALUATION

The main task of the Agency in 2020 was to complete the process of adoption of accreditation standards, preceded by the evaluation of comments from academic and wider public received by the Agency as part of the consultation process on their proposal, as well as the subsequent approval of the methodology for their evaluation.

The Agency received 1,235 comments 1 on the draft accreditation standards and their evaluation was a rather difficult process. Based on the comments received, the Agency decided to modify the original draft accreditation standards. The aim was to consistently accept the new paradigm resulting from the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), which transfers primary responsibility for quality assurance to universities. The Agency took the view that there is a need for sufficient room for manoeuvre for universities to convince the public of the effectiveness and efficiency of their internal quality assurance systems. The Agency therefore decided to replace the specific items and thresholds set out in the original draft accreditation standards by a system of interconnected principles that will guarantee the development of a quality culture in the framework of the fulfilment of the mission of universities.

On 28 February 2020, in accordance with Section 23 of the Quality Assurance Act, the Agency submitted a revised draft accreditation standards for expression to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as “the Ministry of Education”).

On 25 May 2020, a consultation meeting took place at the Ministry of Education on the proposed draft accreditation standards. The meeting was attended by the Chairman of the Executive Board, R. Redhammer, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board, R. Matlovič and Mr Piovarči. For the Ministry of Education, the state secretary of Ľ. Pavlis and Director-General of the Legislative and Legal Section Ž. Surmay.

On 2 June 2020, a meeting of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on Education, Science, Youth and Sport was held with the participation of Minister of Education B. Gröhling, representatives of higher education representation bodies and representatives of the Agency. At the meeting, President of the Executive Board, R. Redhammer, presented the state of play of the draft standards and discussed the comments made by the participants.

On 2 June 2020, the Agency received a statement from the Ministry of Education on the draft accreditation standards. In its observations, the Ministry of Education submitted 9 comments on the draft standards for the internal quality assurance system of higher education (‘internal system standards’), 5 comments on the draft standards for the study programme and 7 comments on the draft standards for the habilitation procedure and the procedure for appointing professors (‘the inuguration procedure’) and therefore referred the proposal back to the Agency for its revision. Executive Board at its meeting of 4 June 2020

1 The draft accreditation standards and comments, together with their summary evaluation, are available on the Agency’s website.

she dealt with this statement of the Ministry of Education on the draft accreditation standards. The Executive Board accepted all comments submitted by the Ministry of Education on the draft standards for the internal system and standards for the study programme. From the comments on the draft standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings, 6 comments were accepted and did not accept 1 comment. The Executive Board took into account the shortcomings identified, adequately incorporated the comments of the Ministry of Education and subsequently submitted a revised draft accreditation standards for the re-expression of the Ministry of Education.

On 24 June 2020, the Agency received a statement from the Ministry of Education on the revised draft standards. In its statement, the Ministry of Education stated that it had not identified any shortcomings in the draft accreditation standards submitted and had no further comments on the modified proposal.

The draft accreditation standards were submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its 18th session. Subsequently, at that meeting on 2 July 2020, the Executive Board approved the standards for the internal quality assurance system of higher education, the standards for the curriculum and the standards for habilitation procedures and the procedure for appointing professors with effect from 1 September 2020.

During the first half of 2020, intensive work was also carried out on the development of a methodology for the evaluation of standards (hereinafter referred to as “methodology”), which refers to a set of procedures, criteria and indicators whereby the working groups of the Agency’s Executive Board and the Agency’s staff evaluate compliance with the standards and arrangements to ensure that the internal system or its implementation complies with the standards for the internal system.

In the process of preparing the draft methodology, the Agency consulted, in particular, representatives of university representations as well as other stakeholders. Consultations were carried out continuously from 2 May 2020 with experienced reviewers and cooperating domestic and foreign experts, such as doc. PaedDr. Marcela Verešová, PhD., Prof. Ing. Jaroslav Nenadál, CSc., Univ. Prof. i. R. Dipl. Ing. Dr. techn. Nicholas Luptáčik; Prof. MUDr. Dušan Meško, PhD., Prof. Ján Závadský, PhD., Prof. Ing. Kristína Zgodavová, PhD., Prof. doc. JUDr. Marek Šmid, PhD, and others.

On 14 July 2020, the Agency announced on its website the launch of consultations with external stakeholders and professional public to prepare the methodology. Subsequently, there was a series of consultations with representatives of university representations (e.g. UK, STU, TUKE, UPJŠ, PEVŠ, BISLA and others) and other stakeholders, namely the Student Council of Higher Education, the Association of Employers’ Unions and Associations of the Slovak Republic, the National Union of Employers, the Council of Higher Education, the Slovak Rector’s Conference, the Alliance of Sectoral Councils and the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education. The draft methodology was approved by the Executive Board at its meeting on 17 September 2020.

1. MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN 2020

In 2020, 13 meetings of the Agency’s Executive Board took place according to schedule (Table 3).

Table 3: Overview of the meetings of the Executive Board of the Agency in 2020

* 1. the meeting 23. 1. 2020

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 13rd session | 20. 2. 2020 |
| 14th session | 23. 4. 2020 |
| 15th session | 21. 5. 2020 |
| 16th session | 4. 6. 2020 |
| 17th session | 18. 6. 2020 |
| The 18th session | 2. 7. 2020 |
| The 19th session | 30. — 31. 7. 2020 |
| 20th session | 20. 8. 2020 |
| 21st session | 17. 9. 2020 |
| 22nd session | 22. 10. 2020 |
| 23 rd session | 19. 11. 2020 |
| 24th session | 17. 12. 2020 |

Meeting of the Executive Board on 23. 1. 2020

The first Executive Board meeting in 2020 was opened by Robert Redhammer, Chairman of the Executive Board, with the participation of all members of the Executive Board. At this meeting, the main points of the meeting were to inform the members of the Executive Board about the takeover of the agenda of the Accreditation Commission, the advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as “Accreditation Commission”) by the Agency in accordance with the transitional provisions of the Act on Quality Assurance and on the number and status of pending procedures by 31 December 2019. The Executive Board took note of this and, on this basis, approved the Agency’s internal rules on its progress in these pending procedures. Furthermore, the Chairman of the Executive Board informed the members of the Executive Board of the comments received to the public on the draft accreditation standards as well as the consultation of a foreign expert, with whom the draft accreditation standards were discussed in detail. At that meeting, the Agency’s draft budget for 2020 and the draft procurement plan for 2020 were approved. 125 candidates were included in the list of assessors by decision of the Executive Board. The Chairperson of the Executive Board also reported on the progress of work related to the preparation of the information system and the Agency’s website.

The following internal rules were approved at this Executive Board meeting:

* + - an internal rule on the Agency’s procedure for assessing the activities of higher education institutions under the rules in force until 31 October 2018; and
    - the Rules of Procedure of the Board of Appeal.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 20. 2. 2020

A summary assessment of the public’s comments on the draft accreditation standards was submitted to the Executive Board for this meeting. The evaluation of the comments received was discussed by the Executive Board and subsequently approved at this meeting the revised draft standards for the internal system, the standards for the study programme and the standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings for the expression of the Ministry of Education. The Executive Board also approved a draft schedule of fees for the Agency’s actions (‘the fee schedule’) for its comments to the public. At that meeting, a further 225 candidates were added to the list of assessors by decision of the Executive Board. For the purpose of assessing the activities of universities, first proposals for the composition of the working groups of the Executive Board were submitted to the meeting. The Chairperson of the Executive Board reported on the training processes of the Agency’s reviewers. At that meeting of the Executive Board, the draft rules of procedure of the Executive Board’s working group, as well as the proposal to amend the Agency’s organisational rules, were approved.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic measures, the meeting scheduled for 19 March 2020 was cancelled.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 23. 4. 2020

At the April meeting, which took place via a telebridge in the online presence of all members of the Executive Board, for the first time the Executive Board took decisions on the assessment of the capacity of universities to carry out the relevant curricula. At that meeting, the Executive Board also discussed the draft methodology. By decision of the Executive Board, more than 500 candidates were included in the list of assessors. The draft accounts for 2019 were also approved at this meeting.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 21. 5. 2020

At this meeting, the Executive Board continued discussions on the draft methodology. It also discussed some public comments received by the Agency on the draft schedule of fees. It also took note of information on the preparation of the publication of calls for applications for inclusion in the Agency’s reviewers list. This Executive Board meeting approved the Agency’s internal rules, namely the SAAVŠ Payment Cards Directive.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 4. 6. 2020

At the meeting, a statement from the Ministry of Education was presented to the members of the Executive Board and received from the Agency on the draft accreditation standards. The Executive Board took this

the comment, discussed the shortcomings identified and the comments made in this statement and subsequently submitted to the Ministry of Education a revised version of the accreditation standards.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 18. 6. 2020

In order to assess the activities of universities, the Executive Board approved mainly the proposals for the composition of the working groups of the Executive Board at its meeting. The Executive Board adopted further decisions concerning the verification of the results of measures taken by higher education institutions in relation to study programmes for which, in connection with their implementation, a university was required to report to the Ministry of Education on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy deficiencies under the regulations in force by 31 October 2018. The Executive Board was informed about the publication of the Covid-19 impact questionnaire on students, which was prepared in cooperation with the Student Council of Universities to map the impact of COVID-19 on students, teaching, exams and their lives, thus contributing to improving the quality of education after a period of extraordinary measures.

The Agency’s annual activity and management report for 2019 was also approved at that meeting and the Agency’s internal rules, namely the Agency’s procurement procedures directive, the Registry Rules, were also approved at that meeting; an amendment to the Internal Regulation 11/2019 of the Directive on the creation and use of the Social Fund for the Agency was also adopted.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 2. 7. 2020

The main theme of the Executive Board meeting was the draft standards for the internal quality assurance system of higher education, the standards for the study programme and the standards for habilitation and inauguration proceedings, together with the methodology for their evaluation. At that meeting, the Executive Board unanimously approved the draft accreditation standards. It also took note of the evaluation of the comments on the draft schedule of fees and approved the proposal for submission to the Ministry of Education for approval. At that meeting, the Executive Board also approved the amendment of the principles for inclusion in the list of reviewers for comments by the public.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 30 days. — 31. 7. 2020

At the two-day external meeting of the Executive Board, which took place in Piešt’any, the Executive Board focused in particular on deciding on the verification of the results of the measures taken by universities in relation to study programmes for which, in connection with their implementation, the university was obliged to report to the Ministry of Education on the outcome of the measures taken to remedy shortcomings in accordance with the regulations in force by 31 October 2018 and to discuss the methodology. This meeting approved the Agency’s internal rules, namely the Agency’s Staff Travel Compensation Directive and the Directive on the internal system for the screening of whistleblowing. 17 candidates were included in the Agency’s review list.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 20. 8. 2020

At that meeting, the Executive Board assessed the reports on the outcome of the measures taken by universities and decided on the fulfilment of the rules and criteria issued under the regulations in force until 31 October 2018. The Executive Board dealt with the finalisation and modifications of the draft methodology; the Chair of the Executive Board informed members about the process of evaluating comments sent to the public on the proposal to amend the principles for inclusion in the list of reviewers and also about the preparation of the Agency’s conference on the introduction of accreditation standards, in particular for higher education institutions.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 17. 9. 2020

At its 21st session, the Executive Board was presented with an assessment of the comments on the proposal to amend the principles for inclusion in the list of assessors and subsequently a new version of this Internal Regulation was approved. The Executive Board also approved the methodology for evaluating the Agency’s standards.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 22. 10. 2020

At this meeting, the Executive Board discussed in particular the upcoming proposal to amend the Quality Assurance Act and also discussed the upcoming amendment to Act No 131/2002 Coll., which concerned in particular the withdrawal of university degrees and the procedure for deciding on the invalidity of the state examination. The Executive Board also dealt with the assessment of candidates for inclusion on the list of assessors and, at that meeting, placed more than 300 candidates on that list. The Chairperson of the Executive Board reported on the progress of the consultations aimed primarily at universities, but also to the public, with a focus on the interpretation of accreditation standards and the possibilities of applying for accreditation. At this meeting, the Executive Board approved the proposed draft internal rules, namely the Data Protection Directive and the Complaints Handling Directive.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 19. 11. 2020

The Chairman of the Executive Board informed the members of the Executive Board about the veto of the amendment to Act No 131/2002 concerning the withdrawal of university degrees and also stated that the proposal for amendment of the Act on Quality Assurance did not state the reservation of the President of the Republic Z. Čaputová. Furthermore, the Chair of the Executive Board informed members about the upcoming meeting with foreign experts related to the Agency’s participation in the international project *Supporting Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education in Compliance with ESG 2015* (hereinafter “SEQA-ESG project”), which will also be attended by representatives of stakeholders from the Slovak Republic.

At that meeting, the Executive Board further endorsed the draft modification of the 2020 budget and the proposal for the modification of the Agency’s 2020 procurement plan and took further decisions on the basis of the verification of the results of the university measures taken to remedy the deficiencies. Other candidates were included in the list of assessors at the meeting and the Executive Board approved

also the Agency’s internal rule, namely the Directive on the procedure for mandatory publication of Agency’s orders, invoices and contracts.

Meeting of the Executive Board on 17. 12. 2020

The Chairman of the Executive Board informed members about the approval of the amendment to the Law on Quality Assurance on 9 December and briefly stated what changes this amendment brought in compared to the previous text of the Act. Due to the approval of the Act on Quality Assurance in question, the Executive Board decided at that meeting to approve the draft amendment to the standards for the study programme, which regulates the specificities of the standards for the assessment of joint study programmes of higher education institutions and its submission for comments by the public after the publication of the approved text of the amendment to this Act. Following the meeting held on 25 and 26 November 2020 in relation to the SEQA-ESG project and on the basis of information on the progress and conclusions of that meeting, the Executive Board recommended to continue the preparation and implementation of measures to improve the quality of the Agency’s activities, as well as to take note of the recommendations identified in this project. At this meeting of the Executive Board, the proposal to amend the Agency’s Accounting Directive was approved and the following internal rules were approved:

* the Agency’s procedure for assessing the activities of higher education institutions according to the rules effective in

31 October 2018 and deciding on consent to the modification of the study programme; and

* Directive on the procedure for the exercise of financial control of the Agency.

At the last meeting of the Executive Board in 2020, the Executive Board approved the calendar of meetings for 2021.

The resolutions adopted by the Executive Board for 2020 are published on the Agency’s website.

1. LIST OF REVIEWERS

In 2020, the Agency continued to expand the list of reviewers from university teachers, scientists, employers, experts in quality assurance systems, students and foreign experts. The Agency published on its website two calls for applications for this list (one open call) inviting the above-mentioned expert groups to apply as an assessor of the Agency.

A total of 1,573 applications were received under these calls. Of this number, 286 applications were received from abroad. For 2020, 1,333 reviewers were approved by the Executive Board. Of this number, 1 304 persons were authorised to be included in the reviewers list. Of this number there are 128 reviewers from the Czech Republic and 158 reviewers from other foreign countries. 104 applications were rejected on grounds of insufficient experience of candidates or of incompatibility of the posts referred to in Article 2(4) of the Rules on the inclusion on the list of assessors, the removal from that list and the creation of working groups of the Executive Board of the Agency (hereinafter referred to as the ‘principles for inclusion on the list of assessors’). Data on applications received and assessed are given in Table 4.

*Table 4 Number of applications and persons enrolled in the reviewer list*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total number of applications received  to the list of reviewers for 2020 | 1 573 |
| — **of which from abroad** | 286 |
| Rejected applications due to lack of experience or incompatibility of functions | 104 |
| Total number of approved assessors by the Executive Board of the Agency | 1 333 |
| — **of which the number of reviewers who, after approval by the Executive Board of the Agency, gave their consent to the alert**  to the list of reviewers | 1 304 |
| Registered foreign reviewers | 286 |
| — **of which from the Czech Republic** | 128 |

\* *according to Art. 2 paragraph 4 Principles for inclusion in the list of reviewers*

On the basis of the Principles for inclusion on the list of assessors, the Executive Board may include in the working groups only those reviewers who, after approval by the Executive Board, have expressed their agreement to the inclusion on that list and have subsequently received training for reviewers.

The main priority for 2020 was to expand the list of assessors, train them and prepare for the work of the Agency’s assessor. Given the important role of assessors in the Agency’s proceedings, the need to train them in the context of new accreditation procedures and in line with the adoption of new accreditation standards, several training activities were carried out gradually throughout 2020. A total of 943 reviewers participated in these activities. Of this number, 98 reviewers were from the Czech Republic and 97 were students. During the first quarter, 93 assessors took part in face-to-face training at the Agency’s premises, of which 43 were students. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the enrolment process was carried out mainly on-line.

In June 2020, the Agency organised a specific training for reviewers who were recruited as Chairpersons of the Executive Board’s working groups in ongoing proceedings of the Agency. 31 reviewers participated in these training sessions and 10 reviewers participated in the on-line form.

In the autumn months of the continuing deterioration of the pandemic situation in the Slovak Republic, reviewers were informed of the new accreditation standards, which entered into force on 1 September 2020. Training oriented to approved accreditation standards has been completed by 785 reviewers.

For individual assessors, the Agency records the professional focus of the assessor, his/her profile (higher education teacher, practitioner, internal system expert, student, etc.) and other data on the professional activity of the assessor, based on which he can propose the assessor to the working group to assess the specific activity of the university.

The Agency shall regularly publish and update the list of persons included in the reviewer list on its website.

1. TAKING OVER OF THE AGENDA OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

Under the transitional provisions of the Quality Assurance Act, as of 1 January 2020, all rights and obligations binding on the Accreditation Commission as of 31 December 2019 were transferred to the Agency. The agenda was taken over on 20 December 2019 and the Agency’s Executive Board took note of the adoption of the agenda of the Accreditation Commission and of the pending files at its meeting on 23 January 2020.

Following the adoption of the Accreditation Commission’s agenda in 2020, the Agency mainly devoted itself to university reports on the elimination of deficiencies that were forwarded to the Agency for equipment from the Ministry of Education.

1. ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES AND DECISIONS OF THE AGENCY

According to the Quality Assurance Act, the Agency is to provide 13 different types of proceedings against higher education institutions. In 2020, it introduced and implemented the first two types of procedures linked to the assessment of the shortcomings of other accreditations imposed on specific higher education institutions. At the same time, it started introducing four other types of procedures related to accreditations of individual study programmes, or their adaptations and procedures on the Agency’s own initiative.

In 2020, the Agency addressed in particular the assessment of university reports on the results of the measures taken to address the shortcomings presented in relation to the time limitation of the right to award the relevant academic titles in specific study programmes or the time limitation of the right to conduct habilitation and inaugural procedures.

From 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020, 195 such university reports were forwarded to the Agency by the Ministry of Education, of which 23 concerned measures to remedy deficiencies in relation to habilitation procedures and inaugural procedures, and 172 related to reports addressing shortcomings in relation to study programmes.

In addition, in 2020, the Agency also dealt with 5 proposals for modification of the study programme submitted by universities and 2 applications for accreditation of a new study programme.

The Executive Board adopted a positive decision in 170 cases. Of these, 152 assessments were made of reports to address shortcomings in study programmes, 16 assessments of reports to address shortcomings in habilitation procedures and inauguration procedures and 2 applications for accreditation of a new study programme. There were a total of 26 negative decisions of the Executive Board; of this, 20 decisions and reports to remedy the shortcomings of habilitation procedures and inaugural proceedings were reported to address the shortcomings of the curriculum programmes and 6 decisions.

The procedures on deficiency-removal reports mainly concerned the assessment of staff guarantees of study programmes (criterion KSP-A6 2, 169 reports) and the rights to carry out habilitation procedures and inauguration procedures (criterion KHKV-A5 3, 22 reports). 1 procedure evaluated the fulfilment of criterion KSP-A14; the criteria KSP-B85 and KSP-B116 were also assessed in 2 procedures.

2 KSP-A6: Guarantee the quality and development of the study programme.

3 Guaranteeing the quality of carrying out the habilitation procedure and the procedure for appointing professors (level of guarantors and co-guarantors of the habilitation procedure and the procedure for appointing professors).

4 KSP-A1: The level of research/artistic activity of the university and the workplaces ensuring the implementation of the study programme.

5 KSP-B8: The suitability of the requirements for candidates and the method of their selection to ensure that candidates with the necessary abilities and preconditions are admitted to the studies (Section 57(1) of Act No 131/2002).

6 KSP-B11: The level of all graduates (from the best to the weakest) with regard to the standard requirements of the quality of the educational process in the relevant field, compliance of the level of knowledge, abilities and skills of graduates with the graduate profile and their intended application method, application of graduates in accordance with the prerequisites.

In total, 125 reviewers participated in the work in 92 working groups. The working groups were usually composed of three assessors when assessing university reports on the results of measures taken to address shortcomings. When considering the application for accreditation of a new study programme, the Working Party consisted of five assessors.

The student assessor was also included in the working group that assessed the study programme. The working groups that assessed the third-level study programme or the right to conduct habilitation and inaugural procedures included a foreign assessor.

The Agency shall publish its decisions7 on the Agency’s website.

Table 5: The number of procedures of the Agency and the structure of the individual decisions of the Agency in the following

proceedings in 2020

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of proceedings  overall | Number of  completed proceedings | Unfinished proceedings | Number of positives  decisions | Number of  negative Decisions |
| Assessment of the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies  study programs | 63 | 63 | 0 | 152 | 20 |
| Assessment of the measures taken to remedy the deficiencies  carrying out habilitation procedures  and inauguration proceedings | 23 | 22 | 1 | 16 | 6 |
| proposal for modification  the study programme | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Accreditation of a new study programme | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Together | 92 | 86 | 6 | 170 | 26 |

7 An overview of the Agency’s decisions for 2020 is set out in Annex 1 to this annual report.

1. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCY
   1. SEQA-ESG project

The Agency is a partner in *the international project “Supporting European quality assurance agencies in meeting the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (SEQA-ESG)*. The main objective of the project is to support the national quality assurance agencies of the participating countries and representatives of the relevant state institutions as national policy makers in establishing the quality assurance system of higher education in accordance with ESG 2015.

One of the project activities carried out was also a peer counselling visit, which took place online via videoconference on 25 due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. — 26 November 2020. The agency was represented at the meeting by the Chairman of the Executive Board Robert Redhammer, Vice-Chair of the Executive Board René Matlovič, Mgr. art. Bálint Lovász and Ing. Andrej Piovarči, PhD. In the premises of the Agency we also welcomed representatives of the Ministry of Education, namely the Director General of the Higher Education Section Jozef Jurkovič, director of the Department of Higher Education Marcel Vysocký and Peter Ondreička. Among the participants were representatives of the Slovak Rector’s Conference, the Council of Higher Education of the Slovak Republic and the Student Council of Universities, as well as representatives of employers. The meeting was attended by ENQA President Christoph Grolimund, who is also the Director of the Swiss Accreditation Agency, Maria Kelo, and Tia Loukkola (EUA), Rony Heintze (AQAS) and Colin Tück (EQAR) were present as experts in this field. The subject of this two-day meeting was mainly to define the objectives and steps in the ongoing transformation of the quality assurance system in the Slovak Republic, as well as the exchange of experience with experts from Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

The programme of the first day of this meeting was mainly aimed at familiarising our foreign guests with the Slovak higher education environment, some specificities of higher education and academia in Slovakia, as well as the legislative framework of the Agency, its activities and cooperation processes with the Ministry of Education in the field of higher education. The second day was a discussion and meeting with stakeholders involved in internal and external quality assurance of higher education, with representatives of universities in Slovakia and representatives of employers.

A brief overview of the topics discussed:

* + - Legislative framework and possible amendments/modifications to the Quality Assurance Act
    - Reviewers and working groups
    - Discrepancy between the Working Party’s opinion and the Executive Board’s decision
    - Improving the process of assessing the activities of higher education institutions by the Agency’s staff
    - Communication and cooperation with employers’ representatives focused in particular on implementation

graduates in the labour market

* + - Communication and cooperation with university students
    - Preparation of thematic analyses
    - Guidelines and examples of good practice
    - Building an internal quality assurance system at universities
    - Building an internal quality assurance system for the Agency’s activities.

Also on the basis of the outcomes of this meeting, the Agency, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, will draw up the so-called Action Plan, which presents a set of activities, procedures and measures of the Agency and the Ministry of Education, which are necessary to establish the system of external quality assurance of higher education in Slovakia in accordance with ESG 2015 and which will create the prerequisites for the admission of the Agency as a member of ENQA and its entry in the EQAR register. The adoption of the Action Plan is foreseen in 2021.

1. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE AGENCY’S ACTIVITIES

Pursuant to Section 7(10)(f) of the Assurance Act, the Executive Board is to supervise compliance with the internal system of quality assurance of the Agency’s activities. The Agency’s quality assurance and improvement processes in 2020 focused on its actions and compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines from the ENQA perspective. A number of internal reports have been produced as part of the internal quality assurance and improvement of the Agency’s work processes:

* Evaluation of the work of the Accreditation Activities Unit, prepared by RNDr. Mária Holická, secretary of the previous Accreditation Commission, on the basis of direct assignment by the Chairman of the Executive Board,
* Record of the management evaluation of the Agency’s proceedings in the period from 1 January 2020 to

31 August 2020, following the completion of the procedures for the assessment of university reports on the elimination of deficiencies from the last accreditation of 81 procedures;

* Report on the progress of the first assessments: Problems identified and recommendations for improvements prepared by the Methodological-analytical Activities Unit at the request of the Chair of the Executive Board, Information on feedback from reviewers — members of the working groups of the Executive Board of the Agency.

As part of improving internal quality assurance and improving the Agency’s work, the Agency underwent a partial external evaluation in 2020:

* assessment of draft accreditation standards by independent foreign experts (Achim Hopbach — former President of ENQA, Austria, and Mark Jones — external consultant, University of Brighton, UK);
* peer counselling visit ENQA and EQAR in the framework of the project “Supporting European QA Agencies in meeting the ESG (SEQA-ESG) — Initiatives to support the implementation of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reforms”, funded by the European Union in 25. — 26 November 2020 in a distance form.

The Executive Board discussed these materials at its meeting on 17 December 2020. It took note of the information provided on the processes of the internal quality assurance agencies in meeting the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area coordinated by ENQA and in which SAAVŠ is a partner.

1. FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE AGENCY
   1. Source of the Agency’s revenue for 2020

So far, the only source of revenue of the Agency for 2020 is the earmarked funds from the State budget, provided through the budget of the provider of the Ministry of Education, in accordance with Section 19(5) of the Act on Quality Assurance for the material and financial security of the beneficiary’s activities (hereinafter referred to as “the purpose”) under the conditions laid down in this contract.

On the basis of contract No 0014/2020 on the provision of funds concluded in accordance with

In 2020, Section 19(5) of the Quality Assurance Act (‘the Contract’) provided the Agency, through a chapter of the Ministry of Education, with funding to secure its activities.

* 1. Appropriations made available for 2020

The total amount of funding of **EUR 1 091 716 was broken down into**:

* + - current expenditure of 1 040 000,- EUR
    - capital expenditure of EUR 51 716,-

The funds were ring-fenced between the different headings and sub-headings of the economic classification and could be used to:

1. wage expenses (610), insurance premiums and insurance contributions (620),
2. other expenditure under the category of goods and services (630),
3. current transfers (640), such as membership contributions to international organisations;
4. acquisition of capital assets (710), such as the purchase of licences, machinery, equipment, equipment, technology or means of transport

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Funding provided to the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in 2020 | Disassembled | Modified |
| Total expenditure (600+ 700) | 1 091 716,00 | 1 091 716,00 |
| Current Expenditure (600) | 1 040 000,00 | 1 040 000,00 |
| Wages, salaries, service income and other personal settlements (610) | 600 000,00 | 600 000,00 |
| Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620) | 209 700,00 | 227 200,00 |
| Goods and services (630), in this | 220 000,00 | 211 100,00 |
| 631 Travel refunds | 25 000,00 | 800,00 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 632 Energy, water and communications | 25 000,00 | 13 800,00 |
| 633 Material | 25 000,00 | 23 000,00 |
| 634 Transportation |  | 500,00 |
| 635 Normal and Standard Maintenance |  | 1 000,00 |
| 636 Lease for rent | 25 000,00 | 48 000,00 |
| 637 Services, in this | 120 000,00 | 124 000,00 |
| 637027 Remuneration of non-employment employees | 90 000,00 | 53 000,00 |
| 637200 Other services | 30 000,00 | 71 000,00 |
| Current transfers (640), in this | 10 300,00 | 1 700,00 |
| 649 Transfers abroad | 10 300,00 | 700,00 |
| 640 AM+ members | — | 1 000,00 |
| Capital Expenditure (700) | 51 716,00 | 51 716,00 |
| Procurement of capital assets (710), in this | 51 716,00 | 51 716,00 |
| 711 Purchase of land and intangible assets (software, licenses) | 16 716,00 | 16 716,00 |
| 713 Purchase of machinery, apparatus, equipment, techniques and tools | 20 000,00 | 20 000,00 |
| 714 Purchase of means of transport of all kinds | 15 000,00 | 15 000,00 |

On the basis of a request approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, the budget originally broken down (approved) was adjusted according to the real needs of the Agency in individual headings and sub-items.

* 1. Implementation of appropriations for the year 2020 to 31. 12. 2020

The total absorption of funds in 2020 amounted to **EUR 896 145.48.** Current expenditure has been used in the following breakdown:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Funding provided in 2020 — implemented in 2020 | Pumping |
| Total expenditure (600+ 700) | EUR 896 145.48 |
| Current Expenditure (600) | EUR 896 145.48 |
| Wages, salaries, service income and other personal settlements (610) | EUR 536 966.87 |
| Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620) | EUR 202 037.18 |
| Goods and services (630), in this | EUR 156 371.33 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 631 Travel refunds | EUR 574.36 |
| 632 Energy, water and communications | EUR 12 353.27 |
| 633 Material | EUR 19,964.33 |
| 634 Transportation | EUR 476.81 |
| 635 Normal and Standard Maintenance | EUR 1 027,86 |
| 636 Lease for rent | EUR 29 176.66 |
| 637 Services, in this | EUR 92 798.04 |
| 637027 Remuneration of non-employment employees | EUR 46 205.30 |
| 637200 Other services | EUR 46 592.74 |
| Current transfers (640), in this | EUR 770.10 |
| 642015 for sickness benefits | EUR 470.10 |
| 649003 International Organisations | $300.00 |
| Capital Expenditure (700) | EUR 0.00 |
| Procurement of capital assets (710), in this | EUR 0.00 |
| 711 Purchase of land and intangible assets (software, licenses) | EUR 0.00 |
| 713 Purchase of machinery, apparatus, equipment, techniques and tools | EUR 0.00 |
| 714 Purchase of means of transport of all kinds | EUR 0.00 |

610 — wages, salaries, service income and DPOs; 620 — premiums and contributions to insurance companies; 637027 — compensation of employees outside the employment relationship

Under the above items, funds were drawn on salaries and contributions paid to insurance companies, for employees in employment and for non-employment employees.

631 — Travel refunds

In 2020, most of the planned missions were cancelled as a result of pandemic measures.

Missions carried out:

* external meeting of members of the Executive Board and SAAVŠ staff responsible for coordinating the meeting in Piešt’any,
* upon invitation, the participation of the Chair of the Executive Board of the Agency, Prof. Ing. Robert Redhammer, PhD, and the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board of the Agency, Prof. RNDr. René Matlovič, PhD., at the meeting of the Slovak Rector’s Conference in Banská Bystrica.

632 — Energy, Water and Communications

Expenditure on energy, telecommunications charges, internet connection and postal services.

633 — Material

The highest item in the drawing was the purchase of computer equipment for the staff and members of the Executive Board of the Agency. The funds were also pumped for the purchase of ordinary consumables (office supplies, cleaning and disinfectants, etc.), interior equipment

to move the agency to new premises, books and telecommunications technology for new staff.

634 — Transportation

Transport of purchased goods (as a result of pandemic measures, most purchases were made over the internet and delivered by courier service).

636 — rent for rent

Payment for rental of premises and other services related to the rental of premises.

637200 — Other services

Personnel expenses — meal vouchers, social fund creation, staff training expenses, etc. Other services ensuring the operation of the agency, such as software services, agency website, safety of work and GDPR, professional consulting services and various fees.

From the item *other services* were paid in 2020 to members of the working groups, for the proceedings to the adopted reports on the correction of the shortcomings of universities, which the Agency is obliged to assess on the basis of the acquired competences of the Accreditation Commission, the advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The amount of money spent on these proceedings amounted to EUR 11 916,-

640 — Current transfers

Compensation for the first 10 days of incapacity for work of the Agency and payment of the membership fee of the *European Network for Academic Integrity*.

700 — capital expenditure

The capital funds provided in 2020 have not yet been absorbed. In accordance with the Treaty and subsequently its amendment, under the Financial Regulation Act, the Agency kept unspent funds in its account, with the possibility of drawing them up until the end of 2022.

The month-on-month increase in the absorption of funds in 2020 was mainly determined by the ongoing filling of posts in priority in the Accreditation Activities Unit and subsequent related expenditure (e.g. technical equipment for new colleagues, meal vouchers, insurance contributions, etc.).

The implementation of the funds was most affected by the pandemic situation of COVID-19 and subsequently by the measures resulting from the Slovak Government Regulation. Many of the planned activities were forced to cancel or move indefinitely. Direct meetings, seminars or conferences the Agency had to deal with operationally in an on-line environment, in the form of on-line broadcasting in cooperation with an external company.

Out of the total funding provided for 2020, **EUR 143 854.52 was not spent from current expenditure.** These have been redeployed under the Law on the Financial Rules for Execution by the end of March 2021.

Unspent capital expenditure of EUR 51 716,- EUR can be drawn up by the end of the year

2022.

* 1. Resources made available to the Agency for 2019

On the basis of contract number 0141/2019 and subsequently its addendum No 1280/2019 on the provision of funds concluded with the provider, in accordance with Section 19(5) of Act No 269/2018

Z. z. on quality assurance of higher education and amending Act No 343/2015 on public procurement and amending certain acts, as amended (hereinafter referred to as “the contract”), the Agency was allowed to draw on the funds granted for 2019 up to 31. 3. 2020.

The overall balance of the 2019 funds amounted to **EUR 272 393.59.**

Of which current expenditure of **EUR 245 643,59 and** capital expenditure of EUR 19 624.16 in

the following breakdowns:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Funding provided in 2019  — drawn in 2020 | Transferred  from 2019 | Pumped  in 2020 | The balance |
| Total expenditure (600+ 700) | EUR 272 393.59 | EUR 265 267.75 | EUR 7 125.84 |
| Current Expenditure (600) | EUR 245 643.59 | EUR 245 643.59 | EUR 0.00 |
| Wages, salaries, service income and DGS (610) | EUR 35 235.12 | EUR 35 235.12 | EUR 0.00 |
| Insurance premiums and contributions to insurance companies (620) | EUR 12 801.75 | EUR 12 801.75 | EUR 0.00 |
| Goods and services (630), in this | EUR 197 433,50 | EUR 197 433,50 | EUR 0.00 |
| 631 Travel refunds | EUR 882.63 | EUR 882.63 | EUR 0.00 |
| 632 Energy, water and communications | EUR 406.26 | EUR 406.26 | EUR 0.00 |
| 633 Material | EUR 119 556.67 | EUR 119 556.67 | EUR 0.00 |
| 634 Transportation | EUR 188.15 | EUR 188.15 | EUR 0.00 |
| 635 Normal and Standard Maintenance | EUR 0.00 | EUR 0.00 | EUR 0.00 |
| 636 Lease for rent | EUR 25 277,37 | EUR 25 277,37 | EUR 0.00 |
| 637 Services, in this | EUR 51 122.42 | EUR 51 122.42 | EUR 0.00 |
| 637027 Remuneration of non-employment employees | EUR 1,693,57 | EUR 1,693,57 | EUR 0.00 |
| 637200 Other services | EUR 49 428.85 | EUR 49 428.85 | EUR 0.00 |
| Current transfers (640), in this | EUR 173.22 | EUR 173.22 | EUR 0.00 |
| 642015 for sickness benefits | EUR 173.22 | EUR 173.22 | EUR 0.00 |
| 649003 International Organisations | EUR 0.00 | EUR 0.00 | EUR 0.00 |
| Capital Expenditure (700) | EUR 26 750.00 | EUR 19 624.16 | EUR 7 125.84 |
| Procurement of capital assets (710), in this | EUR 26 750.00 | EUR 19 624.16 | EUR 7 125.84 |
| 711 Purchase of land and intangible assets | EUR 13 375.00 | EUR 13 029,08 | EUR 345.92 |
| 713 Purchase of machinery, apparatus, equipment, techniques and tools | EUR 13 375.00 | EUR 6 595.08 | EUR 6 779.92 |
| 714 Purchase of means of transport of all kinds | EUR 0.00 | EUR 0.00 | EUR 0.00 |

610 — wages, salaries, service income and DPOs; 620 — insurance premiums and insurance contributions 637027 — compensation of employees outside employment

These items benefited from paid salaries and insurance contributions for employees in employment and non-employment for December 2019 paid in January 2020.

631 — Travel refunds

Foreign mission to Budapest for the project *Quality assurance student expert training*. Other planned missions in the first quarter of 2020, both foreign and domestic, were cancelled as a result of a regulation of the Slovak Government in the context of the pandemic.

632 — Energy, Water and Communications

Expenditure on telecommunications charges and postal services.

633 — Material

Expenditure on conventional consumables, e.g. office supplies, cleaning and disinfectants, telephones and other consumables. The biggest item is the expenditure for furnishing office furniture in the Agency’s new premises and the purchase of computer equipment for newly recruited staff.

634 — Transportation

Expenditure on the Agency’s removal to new premises. Expenditure on imports of purchased material.

636 — rent for rent

Payment for rented premises and services associated with the lease.

637200 — Other services

Personnel expenses — meal vouchers, social fund creation, staff training expenses, etc. Various other services providing the running of the Agency, such as software services, the Agency’s website, miscellaneous fees and expenses for promotional purposes.

640 — Current transfers

Compensation for the first 10 days of incapacity for work by the Agency’s staff.

700 — capital expenditure

Purchase of two Konica-Minolta multifunction devices (copying, printing, scanning), operating program and antivirus program for purchased computing.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Capital expenditure (700) received in the year: | The Subsidy | Pumping | | The balance |
| 2019 | 2020 |
| 2019 | EUR 26 750.00 | EUR 0.00 | EUR 19 624.16 | EUR 7 125.84 |
| 2020 | EUR 51 716.00 |  | EUR 0.00 | EUR 51 716.00 |
| Together | EUR 78 466.00 | EUR 0.00 | EUR 19 624.16 | EUR 58 841.84 |

The possibility to draw on funds carried over from 2019 has been severely limited due to the pandemic. Many planned activities — foreign missions, seminars, visits by foreign experts or training of assessors — had to be suspended as a result of the relevant government regulations. The unspent funds amounting to **EUR 19 613.58 were referred by the Agency** to the Ministry’s account under the provisioning agreement.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aggregation of the implementation of 2019  in 2020 | Current Expenditure | Capital Expenditure | Together |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Carry-overs from 2019 | 245 643,59 | 26 750,00 | 272 393,59 |
| Total absorption of expenditure | 226 030,01 | 19 624,16 | 245 654,17 |
| Unspent funds disbursed | 19 613,58 | — | 19 613,58 |
| Unspent funds  (transferd to the following period) | — 0,00 | 7 125,84 | 7 125,84 |

1. SUMMARY RECAPITULATION OF PUMPING

FUNDING PROVIDED

In 2020, the Agency managed funds provided on the basis of contracts from the budget of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic in 2020 and until the end of March with the funds carried over from 2019 in sum as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of expenditure/year | The Defined Budget | Pumping | The balance |
| Current Expenditure | 245 643,59 | 245 643,59 | — |
| Capital Expenditure | 26 750,00 | 19 624,16 | 7 125,84 |
| from 2019 | 272 393,59 | 265 267,75 | 7 125,84 |
| Current Expenditure | 1 040 000,00 | 896 145,48 | 143 854,52 |
| Capital Expenditure | 51 716,00 | — | 51 716,00 |
| in 2020 | 1 091 716,00 | 896 145,48 | 195 570,52 |
| Total current expenditure | 1 285 643,59 | 1 141 789,07 | 143 854,52 |
| Total capital expenditure | 78 466,00 | 19 624,16 | 58 841,84 |
| Total Summary | 1 364 109,59 | 1 161 413,23 | 202 696,36 |
|  |  |  |  |

Of the total funding for current expenditure of 1 285 643,59,-

**EUR 1 122** 175.49 was spent on the Agency’s activities. Unspent current expenditure from 2019 amounting to **EUR 19 613.58 was** paid to the MŠVVaŠ SR account in March 2020 within the meaning of the contract. Unspent current expenditure granted in 2020 amounting to **EUR 143 854.552 was** transferred to over-execution by 31 March 2021.

Of the capital expenditure totalling EUR **78 466,- EUR 19 624.16 was** exhausted. The balance of funds amounting to **EUR 58 841.84 in** accordance with the Treaties, the amendment to the contract and under the Financial Regulation Act was retained by the Agency in its account with the possibility of drawing them up in the following years.

Developed and released

Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education

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2020